

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

ENGLISH NATION.

Thursday, March, 21. 1706.

I Have been long Pleading against *English* Cruelty, and moving our Masters, the Members of Parliament, to show some Compassion to the Misfortunes of the Miserable——— And when I undertook it first, I thought my self very much in the right, and that, when I urg'd Humanity among Christians one to another, I acted the Christian part, which consists not in Biting and Devouring one another.

I had Reasons from Scripture ; the Duty of Tenderness and Compassion to our Fellow Creatures being there manifest, and to Debtors in particular.

I had Reasons from Humane Policy, and beate Consideration of common Advantages, drawn from that Possibility, that those who now stand, and may sometime or other happen to fall and sink, under the

same or worse Disaster ; and really I thought these Reasons very good and sufficient.

I had Reasons indeed, from the Interest of Creditors, as well as Debtors ; and the Evident Proof, that making the latter Spend the Estates of the former in Prison, and Privilege Places, was certainly the most indirect way of getting the best Compositions.

I had Reasons from the Disasters of Trade, which oblig'd People to consider, that in a Time of publick Interruptions to Business, Men's Bottoms would be try'd, and the Infirm would fall of Course ; that by numerous Losses, those that were to day Creditors to Bankrupts, to morrow became Debtors and Bankrupts, and stood in Need of the same Mercy, they denied to their Neighbours.

And

And I had Reasons from the Difference the Law ought to make between the unhappy, and the unhappily fraudulent contriving Knave; between the deceiving Bankrupt, and the deceiv'd Bankrupt; between him, that by his Fall pulls down his unwary Neighbour, and that unwary Wretch, that is pull'd down. — But to make no Distinction of this Sort, would be to hang the Traveller with the Highway-Man.

These and many more were the Reasons, why I have strenuously argued, and perhaps not ineffectually, for some Law, that might prevent these Inundations in Trade, these Invasions of honest Men, and these Earthquakes that over-throw Mountains in our Negoece.

Nay, sometimes I was apt to Suggest the following Insignificant Trilles, viz That a Prison paid no Debts; That the more a Bankrupt spent, the less he had left; and that the less he had, the less the Creditors would have at last; That he that had nothing to Pay, could pay nothing; and that to keep Men in Perpetual Prison for Debt, was Murdering Men by Law; and the like.

But as the *Muscovites* learn to fight by being beaten by the *Swedes*, and perhaps in time will be Gainers by all the Losses, and pay their Teachers home for all their Instruction; — And as every wise Man Encreases in Wisdom, by adding Experience to his Understanding; so, Gentlemen, give me leave, *à la Penitent*, to inform you, how I come to be made much wiser than I was before, and to be better instructed, than when I first undertook the Debate; for I esteem it no Dishonour to acknowledge my self convinc'd, when I have been before in an Error.

What tho' I was not at the General *Callico-Club* at *Skinners Hall*, to hear the wise Reasons given there, by those vast Improvers of the Woollen Manufactures, the Linnen-Drapers, Callico-Printers, and, — And so mis'd of those cogent Reasons, that prevail'd with some other Gentlemen to break their Words, and after having promised upon their Honour to forward their

Bill, become protest Opposers of it. — I hope, I may be as well convinc'd by their Reasons, tho' I did not hear them, as they that did hear them, and did not understand them.

What tho' I have no particular Debtor, who I have squeez'd too hard, and that I have got more from than all the rest of his Creditors, which if this Act passes, I must refund. I hope, I may as well justify my being against the Bill with no reason, as Mr. G... B... can, for a Reason he is ashamed to tell.

I cannot therefore close these Subjects, without letting you hear some of those more weighty Reasons, the Opposers of this Bill have fortify'd themselves with, which had I had the Happiness to have known sooner, perhaps I might have been of the same Mind with Mr. W—— and others; and I cannot but lament my long Ignorance in this Matter, and wonder these Gentlemen should not think it worth their while to enlighten me sooner, and make me as wise as themselves, in the following Particulars.

1. That Bankrupts and Insolvents grow Rich by lying in Prison, and are frequently enabled by the Confinement of a Gaol to Pay their Debts; for that this being an Age, particularly Compassionate to the Miserable, Friends and Relations often raise Funds for delivering them, and not only Pay their Debts, but leave them Rich, very Rich when it is done.

What, tho' sometimes here and there a few are Starv'd, and Perish with Want and Misery, in *Newgate*, the *Fleet*, *Queen's Bench* and *Rules*, their Number is considerable, and put all together, they cannot prove, that above 500 Families have been Starv'd so, for almost a *W H O L E YEAR* — Whereas the Number that daily are deliver'd, by the Generosity of Mankind, is hardly to be reckon'd up.

2. That the Great Ourcry, of the Cruelty of Creditors, is a *Scare Crow*, a meer *Rambeal* and *Bloody-Bones*, a *Priapus*, set up to fright Fools, and Amuse the World; the thing is quite contrary, and whenever Debtors are Honest, and will but come and

and Surrender MORE THAN THEY HAVE, the Creditors are always kind, and give them back part of it, and Encourage them to begin the World again WITH NOTHING, to the manifest Relief of them and their Families, and this is so frequent, that there are unquestion'd Instances of it, particularly in the Linnen-Draper in *Covent Garden*, about which, a certain Gentleman——told some forg'd Stories at the Bar of the House of Lords——For these Gentlemen have us'd that poor Man so tenderly, that having got all he has in the World, and dispos'd of it most Compassionately, at about half the Value, Charitably turn'd him and his Wife out of Doors, and not left him a Shilling to buy Bread; they Generously now offer him his Liberty, and the Honour of a Journey-man's Office, if he will but quit his Hopes of Ten Pound a Year, that is not yet in his Possession, nor never may be.

However, as the Compassions of these Gentlemen require a larger Description, in order to Confute the Allegations of those, that Cry out of Cruelty; there is a large History, of the several Remarkable Instances, of the Mercy of Creditors in *England*, preparing for the Press, in which those Persons, now Scandaliz'd that way, may be Vindicated, *as far as Matter of Fact will do it*, from these sort of Aspersions, particularly of a certain Tender Hearted Gentleman-Creditor to his own Father, two or three Compassionate Brothers, and some other decent Examples to Clear the Nation of this Scandal.

3. Another mighty convincing Argument alledg'd against this Bill, and which had I known sooner, perhaps might have chang'd my Opinion, is the *Clandestine Contrivance* of it, and its being carried, *as they say in Hugger-Mugger*, by the People concern'd, and by my self in particular; what tho' it was always *Printed in the Votes*; what tho' it was the *first Bill* read, and the *last Bill* pass'd in the House of Commons; what tho' this *Paper* treated and argued upon it for a *Month together*, Linnen

Drapers and Stock-Jobbers are Men of Hurry and Business, Men of *Grandeur and Consideration*, and are oblig'd sometimes for their particular Service to deal in Clamour, *make great Noise about nothing*, and beat the *Exchange-Alley Kettle-Drums so loud*, when they have occasion to make Stocks rise or fall, that the *Trifles* cannot be heard; nor are they oblig'd to divert their serious Thoughts to the impertinent Drudgery of reading *Votes and Reviews*, *which when they have read, they are not always the wiser for*; they are Gentlemen so considerable in Trade, that they ought to have had Notice sent them, of what was a doing in these Matters, and the two Houses could do less than *send them Advice* of the Proceedings; and no doubt but it was in the Sence of this *Grandeur* of their Party, that when the House of *Lords* order'd the Merchants to attend, to give their Opinion in this Bill, 'twas taken so ill by these Gentlemen, that truly their Lordships were only attended by some of the *Drapers Journey men*, and the very Mob of their Trade. — And it ought to be recorded to the Dignity and Reputation of the Drapers; either to prove that their Masters thought it below them to wait upon their Lordships, or that the Journey-men could speak more to the Purpose than the Masters.

4. Another topping Argument against this Bill, and which, had I been better Appris'd of, I might perhaps have been of their Mind in, is, *that it is not the Sence of the City*; this requires, I confess, some Examination, and by a New way of Drapers Arithmetick, may be true for ought I know; there are Secrets in Nature, that are not always to be Arriv'd to, in the Common Methods of Demonstration; some Languages, you know, are Wrote from the Right Hand to the Left, as some others are, from left Hand to right; some Folks Prayers are said backward, others forward, and some are not said at all——*viz.*

——Now as we are not sure by our Common Knowledge, that all Peoples Reckonings are kept the same way; so, tho' generally

generally speaking, all over the City, nineteen Men of Trade and Credit, are for the Bill; nay, tho' their Representatives were for it, and one of them was Chairman of the Committee, and carried it up to the Lords, yet ealie that the twentyeth Part may have the Majority of the other Nineteen, is, for ought I know, as ealie to Demonstrate, as the Bankrupts ought to be left to the Mercy of their Creditors, and Men be Murther'd for Debt.

Well, Gentlemen, I cannot but be Sorry, I did not come to these Inlightnings, before 'tis now too late! The Bill is Pass'd, *Hinc ille Lacrimæ*; Mob-Tyranny is ceas'd, the Innundation of Cruelty is stop'd, and these Thieves the Commissioners, the Goths and Vandals of Trade, will no more overrun the Nation.

I shall close the Discourse of this Subject in my Next, with some good Advice, both to Debtor and Creditor; which if they have not the Grace to make use of, shall be no Fault of the Author of the Review.

THESE are to give Notice, that upon Enquiry in the Matter of Fact, relating to a Letter, Sign'd J. Robinson, and left at Mr. Matthews's, with Order to Insert Mr. Robinson's Name, in the Title of a Book Call'd, Scepticism, and Fundamental Errors, &c. It appears, that the said Letter was Wrote by Mr. Robinson's Son, in his Father's Absence; the Author of the said Tract assuring him, there were no Indecent Reflections in it on Mr. Clark.

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